DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 185 863 FL 011 398

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TITLE ESL for Non-Academic Adults. Parallels in L1 and L2. CATESOL Occasional Papers, Number 5.
INSTITUTION California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the TESOL Summer Meeting (Los Angeles, July 13, 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; Adult Students; Class Activities; *Educationally Disadvantaged; *English (Second Language); Interaction; Intonation; Kinesthetic Methods; Language Acquisition; Language Research; *Multisensory Learning; Native Language Instruction; *Second Language Instruction; *Second Language Learning; Suprasegmentals; *Teaching Methods; Visual Aids

ABSTRACT

English as a second language for the non-academically oriented adult can be facilitated by structuring their early linguistic input in a way similar to the way a parent structures input for a child learning a first language. The four components through which children learn their native language and which also concern adult learning are: (1) functional interaction; (2) visual/kinesthetic cues; (3) modified parent/teacher speech; and (4) music, rhyme and rhythm. Interactional cues give the learner conceptual knowledge of language and an understanding of function prior to production of speech. Body movement in conjunction with cognitive input facilitates long-term recall. Visual cues such as cards, posters, and charts are particularly good for use with students who scarcely read or write their native language. The visuals and real objects serve to cue comprehension, conversation, and grammatical exercises and they have the psycholcgical advantage of transferring attention from the learner to the purpose of the exercise. The type of speech style students hear is another factor. Non-academic learners respond to simplified syntax and limited vocabulary geared by the teacher to the learners' optimal way of learning. Finally, musical and rhythmic activities sensitize the student to the intonation patterns and rhythm of the language. (AMH)

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California Association - Teachers of
English to Speakers of Other Languages

CATESOL Occasional Papers
Number 5 (Fall, 1979)

ESL FOR NON-ACADEMIC ADULTS: PARALLELS IN L_1 AND L_2

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Dr. Abraham Maslow once said that if the only tool you own is a hammer, you tend to look at everything as if it were a nail. I'd like to share with you some special tools for teaching ESL specifically to adult immigrants who have had very little formal schooling in their native countries. I have found that these "survival" students have special needs in their learning process, and I'd like to suggest some lesson components that might allow them to acquire English as painlessly as possible.

Traditional approaches to second language learning have emphasized the grammar and structural properties of the target language, and although presenting English as an explicit set of rules for forming sentences can be an effective method for some class populations, it seems to me highly inappropriate for students who have no language consciousness--students who don't know a verb from an apostrophe or a preposition from a conjugation.

I suggest that ESL for these learners can be best facilitated by structuring their early linguistic in-put in a way similar to the way a parent structures in-put for a child learning a first language. Children initially experience comprehension and success in learning their native language through the following components:

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PRELINGUISTIC INPUT

1. Functional Interaction
2. Visual/Kinesthetic Cues
3. Modified Teacher/Parent Speech
4. Music, Rhyme and Rhythm

I will define these four in-put factors and show some parallels which may be drawn for second language learning. I will share some ideas on how these four components can be utilized with adult immigrants of minimum academic experience and pinpoint for you some current teaching techniques that, when combined in a daily plan, provide a process that is in harmony with the natural order of language acquisition. This type of daily plan presents to your students lively, low stress activities that are conversational and interactional in nature, that focus on immediate and contextual topics, that require no translation or continuity of classes (for those of you who teach multi-cultural open enrollment classes), and that, in general, promote the uninhibited spontaneous speech of a child--even on the beginning level.

A slightly different version of this paper was presented at the TESOL Summer Meeting at UCLA, July 13, 1979.

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FUNCTIONAL INTERACTION

First of all, let's explore the place of functional interaction for both the child and the adult learner. We know that first language is acquired with no awareness of the language structure or parts of speech. A child learns grammatical rules by analogy to the rules of action and attention experienced in play and interaction with the mother. Jerome Bruner has told us that, in the process of being played with and cared for, the child becomes aware of cooperative and joint action. He learns about giver and receiver, actor and action, and do-er and done-to. He learns to recognize the function of utterances according to a sequence of events or physical actions or constructions with objects. A child's attention is drawn to verbal communication by the structure of the acts in which he participates and in which the communication is taking place. For example; he hears "Go bye-bye?", and then he is whisked out the door. He hears "Don't touch!", and he is turned around and pointed away from something. His mother says "One for you and one for me, and one for you...", when playing with the blocks, and through these processes there is a symbolic accentuation of agents and objects and actions, as well as of the role reversals and turn taking that act as preparation for verbal communication.

The important point to be made here is that these interactional pre-linguistic cues give a child conceptual knowledge of language and an understanding of function before he can actually produce any speech of his own. Before he is able to produce anything more intelligible than "mama" or "baba," he understands and is able to respond to many requests and statements made by his parents. He may not be able to produce the words, "Go and pick up the red truck and put it in the toy box," but he understands what it means in context, and he is able to complete the action. So it appears that a child must know what he wants to say and have some perception of how to attain this "goal" before he begins to use language. He must associate a clear function with each form or utterance in order to be motivated to use it.

To relate this to second language acquisition if your students are allowed to experience the function of the words and sentences that you present to them, they will be able to establish a meaningful association between sounds and concepts and social situations. Then, and only then, will they be motivated to use the language. Since the use of translation is often neither practical nor possible--especially in a multi-cultural situation--and since grammatical terms and concepts are foreign to our non-academic students' background, we must find other methods to give clues to meaning. We must use various contextual stimuli, such as kinesthetic and visual cues.

KINESTHETIC CUES

There are probably more experimental and field studies to support the sensory motor principal for language learning than any other single concept in language acquisition. The hypothesis is that long-term recall can be facilitated through activation of the kinesthetic system--that body movement in conjunction with cognitive in-put is the most effective teaching aid available. Three researchers and teachers who have worked extensively with this concept are Dr. James Asher, Elizabeth Pomijn, and Contee Seely, all from the San Francisco area.

Dr. Asher's Total Physical Response approach involves presenting the language so that the consistent and simple form of the verb comes first--the imperative.

In a TPR learning situation, students are involved in carrying out certain

tasks which the teacher has requested. In using the imperative, never is the verb separated from the immediate and visible function. Students are allowed to experience a pre-verbal period of several hours when they simply listen, watch and respond physically to increasingly more complex commands. They move about the room in various ways, manipulating objects, and interacting with one another and with their environment. In this way, a student is immediately and consistently aware of the meaning and purpose for learning the utterance.

Students respond in unison or in small groups, and when they indicate a desire, they respond individually with confidence. Their comprehension is phenomenally fast, and their retention of what they learn is outstanding. They are not allowed to speak until they have approximately 10 to 15 hours of physical practice, and usually by that time they are demanding to speak. In my experience with this method, I have never seen the reticence or shyness to speak that usually accompanies early language training.

For those of you who have not yet worked with a physical response method, here is a sample of early lesson content that a student might experience in an Asher-oriented classroom:

stand up	go to sleep	mouth
turn around	snore	nose
sit down	pick up	hands
move over	put	red
walk to the	give	blue
point to the	show	green
touch		yellow
shake hands	door	
hug	table	
bump	chair	
push	clock	
say excuse me	floor	
say good morning	desk	
cry	pencil	
laugh	book	
sneeze	head	
cough	eyes	

All of these words are presented in various combinations and re-combinations, such as these:

Stand up
Walk to the table
Pick up the pencil
Give the pencil to Pedro

Close your eyes
Go to sleep
Snore

These lessons prove, even to the most frightened or mystified student, that it is possible to understand and respond to English. It creates a lighthearted and playful atmosphere that invites exploration and the dropping of inhibitions. Very early, students begin to speak spontaneously, creating their own "commands" for the other students to follow by re-combining the words they have experienced

and learned. It almost seems that sometimes they try to outdo each other for the most bizarre ideas. It is not unusual to hear students tell their friends to "Stand on the table," "Push the pencil on the floor with your nose," "Put the piano on the teacher," or "Jump around the hat with Susana."

Another method that is a direct take-off and expansion of James Asher's work is described in a wonderful book written by Libby Romijn and Contee Seeley which is available through Alemany Press in San Francisco. It is called Live Action English for Foreign Students, and it consists of 66 action series. Each series is a lively one-page "happening," so to speak--a list of sequential imperatives to be performed in the classroom with various props and related to a specific theme, such as, Washing Your Hands, Going For a Drive, Using a Pay Phone, Going Shopping, Wrapping a Present. For example, here is a lesson called Ice Cream and T.V. that is one of the students' favorites:

Go to the refrigerator.
Open the freezer.
Get the ice cream out.
Close the freezer and the refrigerator.
Put some ice cream in a bowl.
Leave the carton on the counter.
Go into the other room.
Turn on the T.V.
Sit down and watch your favorite program.
Eat your ice cream.
When you are finished, go back for more.
Oh no! What a mess! The ice cream is melted.
You forgot to put it away!!

Included in the book are general procedural instructions for presenting each series, and each series is made up of basic survival vocabulary which can be the basis for a great variety of take-off lessons--especially verb work. It is an excellent book to use with beginning and intermediate levels, and it is uniquely suited for multi-level, open-enrollment classes.

VISUAL CUES

Another widely used and valuable method to facilitate comprehension in both first and second language acquisition involves the use of pictures--cards, posters, and charts. They serve many uses in giving meaningful practice in sounds, structures, and vocabulary. In a classroom where there are many students who scarcely read or write in their native language, or where there are representatives of numerous ethnic backgrounds, nearly all lessons require the use of visuals.

Picture cards serve as a basis for various substitution drills, to highlight syntax, to graphically illustrate inversions, and to elaborate on stories. By sequencing pictures on a bulletin board, by introducing pictures in a specific order, or by changing card order with slow deliberation in front of the class, a teacher can make her students aware of correct sentence building and of the constants and variables in word order--even if the students have never formally studied grammar or parts of speech.

Also, transition can be made easily from pictures to written passages by systematically matching single-word cards to picture cards when students are ready to begin reading. Various games can be presented to the students with the

object of matching various cards or substituting a word for a picture.

Another advantage to the use of pictures or other visual representations, besides helping to cue conversation and comprehension, is the psychological advantage of attention transference. In the process of handling, passing, moving, and substituting cards, the student's attention is drawn away from himself and from the grammar structure being practiced. His concentration is on the cards and on the "puzzle" presented. The focus of his activity becomes the "Game." Through this de-focusing of grammar practice, the anxiety of having to perform correctly is somehow lost in the shuffle, and his practice continues without self-consciousness.

REAL OBJECT CUES

Students are able to understand and retain meanings better sometimes when they have been shown or have worked with some real objects associated with the linguistic in-put. A child, almost from birth, touches things, manipulates them, turns them around, tastes them, and in this way he develops an increasing understanding of their properties. His perception of objective reality is a pre-requisite to language mastery. Just as a mother interacts with her child with a ball or a cup or a fuzzy toy, or any object that catches his interest, as a means to language acquisition, so may an adult learner begin to master a second language through interaction with a focus on real objects.

The classroom activities that revolve around the tangible objects in the teacher's "junk box" are infinite. Real things, such as grocery bags, boxes, and cans, tools, articles of clothing, hats, newspapers, fruits and vegetables, and assorted household junk, can be incorporated into a myriad of open-ended or structured dialogues and planned or extemporaneous skits. A collection of this sort facilitates the presentation and practice of many language items, and since many of the props can be donated by and collected from your students, they reflect their interests and their reality, which helps to make content more relevant.

An example of working with real objects would be the old stand-by "The Grocery Bag"--a large bag from Albertson's or Safeway full of miscellaneous and assorted grocery containers whose names they can practice: Box of Cornflakes, Bottle of Coke, Bag of Cookies, Tube of Toothpaste, Jar of Jam, etc. From learning the names of items, each marked with an outrageous price, they can mill around the room, each holding one of the items practicing the dialogue:

"What are you gonna buy?"	"I'm gonna buy a carton of eggs."
"How much is it?"	"It's $1.30."
"$1.30??? Wow! That's expensive!"	"I know...It's ridiculous isn't it?"

An exercise such as this gives practice with numbers, questions, with What and How Much, and allows the expression of the exasperation we all feel daily in the supermarket. By letting the students mill around randomly with objects as cues, rather than sit at desks with books, the whole class may speak and interact with whom they choose in a more natural experience, and at the same time, the teacher is free to mill around, too, listening and helping those who need help.

MODIFIED SPEECH OF PARENT/TEACHER

The third factor to aid comprehension both in first and second language learning is the type of linguistic in-put a learner hears. Noam Chomsky has claimed that the language that children hear from their parents is "meager and degenerate, characterized by false starts and hesitations, unfinished and ungrammatical." He indicated that it is a hindrance and a poor model for the child. However, later research has shown that the language addressed to children, though modified, is generally well-formed by any criterion. Parents are very selective in their speech style and develop a very special way of speaking to their children.

According to a multitude of studies, cited in deVilliers and deVilliers, 1978, when talking to their children, parents restrict their speech to referring to events "here and now"--in context with their actions, they change their intonation and their pitch, and they speak slower and more distinctly in order for a child to identify separate utterances and recognize completions. They repeat their utterances, they expand on what the child has said, they use emphatic stress to highlight certain key words, and they make many grammatical simplifications, such as fewer verbs, modifiers, and conjunctions. Parents avoid the use of third person constructions as well as passive voice.

In second language teaching, there seem to be two schools of thought related to the type of speech a teacher should present to her students. One school believes that from the very first day, a teacher should speak in a natural tone at a normal rate, using everyday vocabulary and idiomatic expressions when addressing her students. This school feels that students must become accustomed to hearing the language exactly as it is spoken--that it does students a disservice to hear simplified language in the classroom, giving them an unrealistic impression of what English sounds like.

Many teachers, however, and especially those working with entry level non-academic learners, will consciously and systematically simplify their syntax and limit their vocabulary to reflect only the structures and vocabulary that has already been presented in the classroom. Difficult constructions, such as passive voice, tag questions, negative questions, and embedded clauses are consciously avoided, as are idiomatic expressions. They, as a parent with a child, speak more slowly and distinctly, in shorter sentences. They repeat, prompt, and expand their students' utterances, but I don't mean to imply that baby-talk is used. Obviously there is an optimum level of speech complexity that both challenges and stimulates the student to progress. According to current research, students are more attentive to and best motivated by a teacher's language that is slightly beyond their own productive level. Ideally, then, a teacher must continually "fine tune" her speech to the progressing abilities of her students--staying always one step ahead of them in the journey. She must strive to be aware of the level at which each of her students is capable of operating, of his or her optimal way of learning, and of the time he or she needs in order to respond.

MUSIC, RHYME, AND RHYTHM

The fourth and final component I would like to mention is the use of music, rhyme, and rhythm as pre-linguistic preparation. Typically, two and three year olds are taught many rhyming and rhythmic games, such as "One Two Buckle My Shoe, Three Four Shut the Door," and "Here's the Church, Here's the Steeple, Open the Door and See All the People." These activities systematically introduce the intonation and rhythmic patterns of the native language. Through poems and rhymes

he becomes systematically sensitized to certain constraints and patterns in his language as well as having the advantage of using the powerful kinesthetic response in the memory process. In this way, predictable rules, sequences, and signals are established.

As a parallel to the rhymes and rhythm games that parents teach their children, songs, poems, and dances can also be very valuable tools in the teaching of a second language. Lesson material that can be combined with recreation or aesthetic appreciation provides a welcome change of pace and enhances student motivation in the classroom.

If you have the space and the energy, there is nothing more wild and crazy to watch than a room full of Chinese, Persians, Mexicans, and Thais holding hands and trying to dance the Virginia Reel, shouting, "All join hands, forward and back--right hand round, circle left and go back home!" They can see and feel the meaning of the words through the dance and no translation is necessary. They have been transported back into the old west of the cowboy movies through simple instructions and music that is available at any public library.

If you feel you have no talent to play the guitar or the piano for your students to sing along with, many text book companies now have sing-along records especially made for your ESL students. Virtually all students love to sing and seem to especially like old American folk tunes such as "Billy Boy" and "Clementine" for their repetition and story telling. In the case of these old songs, many times because of outdated or poetic vocabulary or because of slang, the meaning is not clear to the students. If that is the case, I don't bother to translate; I just use them as practice in rhythm or quick combining of English sounds. For example, a few days ago, my Chinese student, Leong, was exuberantly singing a solo chorus of "Skip to My Lou" and swung on into a verse that went, "Lost my partner, Painted Blue, lost my partner, Painted Blue...." He was so enthusiastic that the worst thing I could have done was to stop him and correct his choice of combination, so I just joined him.

I want to especially highlight a wonderful technique for learning the intonation patterns, the rhythm, and the reductions that occur in English, for those of you who are not yet familiar with the work of Carolyn Graham. Ms. Graham has developed exercises called "Jazz Chants" that adult learners find delightful.

Her Jazz Chants are recited by the students in chorus or in small groups to a 4/4 time. The students chant and snap their fingers or clap--sometimes they get very carried away and start stomping their feet or dancing around the room! Through these exercises, the stiff, stilted student pronunciation of "Where-are-you-going-to-go?" becomes "Where ya gonna go?" and the question "What-did-you-do-today?" turns into the more common "Wa-ja do t'day?" Repetition of such short answers as "Yes, I do! Yes, I do!" and "No, they don't! No, they don't!" through jazz chanting helps these responses to come more naturally in conversation. The following is an example from her book, Jazz Chants For Children that gives practice with WH__ questions and "going to":

Grandma's going to the grocery store
One, two, three, four
Grandma's going to the grocery store
One, two, three, four
Who's going? Grandma's going.
Where's she going? To the grocery store

What's she going to buy at the grocery store?
One, two, three, four
A loaf of bread, a bottle of milk,
A big bag of cookies and a little can of peas.
A loaf of bread, a bottle of milk,
A big bag of cookies and a little can of peas.
Grandma's going to the grocery store
One, two, three, four!

To summarize, it has been my experience in teaching that adult students with very little academic background respond best to a learning process that is playful, functional, and interactional in nature, and that focuses on immediate and relevant topics. I have seen that they may feel intimidated by presentation of formal grammar practice. Formal explanations of parts of speech or structural exercises often serve only to hinder their progress and their staying power.

If these learners are allowed to progress through "Developmental Stages," initially experiencing success through activities incorporating body movement, object manipulation, visual sequencing, modified teacher speech, and rhythmic linguistic exercises, they will acquire their new language joyfully and enthusiastically, as does a child.

There are as many different methods and philosophies for teaching ESL as there are ESL teachers. There is obviously no single method that works for every class situation or every teacher. Fritz Perls said that learning is nothing more than discovering that something is possible. And teaching is merely showing someone that something is possible. It is very likely that the secret to innovative and creative instruction lies in remaining open to all the possibilities--to exploration and to discovery.

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